

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-31 are pending in this application. Claim 3 has been amended herewith to specifically recite all of the limitations of prior claim 1, in order to expedite the prosecution of the present application, Claims 13, 14 and 22-31 have been allowed. Claims 1, 2, 8-12, and 15-21 have been canceled without prejudice.

Support for the above amendment may be found throughout the specification as originally filed. No new matter has been added by virtue of this amendment.

II. 35 U.S.C. 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. 103(a) REJECTIONS

(i) Claims 1 and 8-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,067,144 to Murouchi (hereinafter Murouchi).

(ii) Claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,870,593 B2 to Satoh (hereinafter Satoh).

In response, Applicants respectfully assert that above rejection to claims 1 and 8-10 based upon Murouchi and the rejection to claim 11 based upon the combination of Murouchi and Satoh are now moot.

Claim 3 was indicated in the instant Office Action as being allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of claim 1. In this regard, claim 3 has been amended herewith to recite all of the limitations recited in prior claim 1, in order to expedite prosecution of the present application. Thus, amended claim 3 is allowable over the Murouchi and Satoh references.

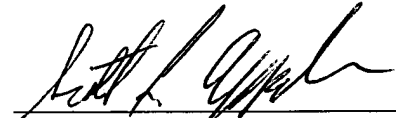
Moreover, previously objected to claims 4-7 are also patentable over Murouchi and Satoh because these claims depend from and incorporate all of the limitations of claim 3 and thus removal of the objections to these dependent claims is likewise requested. It is also noted that the above amendment to claim 3 was made for the purpose of expediting prosecution of the present application, but does not constitute an admission regarding the merits of the rejections made in the instant Office Action.

III. CONCLUSION:

In summary, applicant respectfully submits that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to that end is earnestly solicited.

If a telephone conference would be of assistance in furthering prosecution of the subject application, applicant requests that the undersigned be contacted at the number below.

Respectfully submitted,



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